

## Esther (Part Three)

**Chapter Three : Haman**

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**Given 21-Jan-17; Sermon #1360**

If you would please turn in your Bibles to Psalm the 83rd chapter. It is a fairly well known psalm which recounts a conspiracy against Israel. But here in verses 5-8 it tells us who is involved.

**Psalm 83:5-8** For they have consulted together with one consent; and form a confederacy against You: The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites; Moab and the Hagrites; Gebal, Ammon, and Amalek; Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre; Assyria also has joined with them; they have helped the children of Lot.

And then God tells us through the psalmist, Selah, or think about this, consider this list.

Now these nations provide a fairly complete rundown of the ancient enemies of Israel. But what is interesting here is, if you go on, you will find that the psalmist makes a point of letting us know that they are the enemies of God as well, not just the enemies of Israel. And you can take from that, that if you are the enemies of Israel, then you are the enemies of God as well.

But notice which one is at the top of the list. Edom, the descendants of Esau, is given primacy of place among these people who are confederated with one another, conspiring against God's people. And after the Edomites comes the usual suspects—ones that we would expect to be against Israel. They were nations that were arrayed around Israel and here was poor little Israel trying to defend itself against these people, and the same thing is happening today in the Middle East. But I want you to realize that this is something that not all people pick up but actually Edom and his descendants or Esau's descendants are mentioned three times in this list. It is not just Edom, but there are two others that are also Edomites, but we do not call them Edomites necessarily.

The first we see in the list is Gebal in verse 7. A lot of people mistakenly believe that this is a place up in what is modern day Lebanon. The Phoenician city of Gebal, also renamed later as Byblos (where we get the word Bible), but that is not the case. It is not the ancient city of Gebal. This Gebal is actually a tribe of Edomites that had become separated from other Edomites and had been given their tribal name, Gebal. And then of course, is the one that is at the end of that same line, Amalek. Everybody remembers the Amalekites. These tribes, Gebal and Amalek, did something at some point to be separated from Edom and eventually they established their own identities. We do not actually hear much about the Gebalites, we do not know what they did, but we do know about the Amalekites, and they in particular were a thorn in Israel's side all through their history.

Let us now go to the book of Amos, chapter 1. If you remember, the book of Amos starts with God giving judgment on all these nations that surround Israel and it runs through chapter 2. Finally He zeroes in on Judah and Israel itself. But one of the ones that He gets to here in verse 11 is the nation of Edom.

**Amos 1:11** Thus says the Lord: "For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment [Now here are the reasons He gives us a because it lays it out very plainly. Why is he going to punish Edom?], because he pursued his brother [Jacob, or Israel. Remember Esau and Edom are the same thing.] with the sword [and that is one], cast off all pity [that is two]; his anger tore perpetually [that is three], and he kept his wrath forever." [that is four—for three transgressions, and for four]

We have here listed the four transgressions of Edom.

So, from the days of Esau himself, actually from the time they were in the womb, they were contending with one another. Esau contending with Israel, and in the days of Esau when he was older and Jacob had stolen his blessing and his birthright, there was a burning hatred of Jacob and this became a burning hatred of all Israelites, all that came from Jacob, and it has been nourished somehow among the Edomites and been perpetuated down the line, from Edomite father to Edomite son, and then on into the next generation and the next generation and the next generation, to today. If any

people would form a confederacy against the Israelites, it would be Edom because of this hatred.

Notice what comes after "because" here. I want to just give you an idea of what this entails, how this pursuit of his brother Jacob manifested itself.

First, we have that "he pursued his brother with the sword." So, it manifested as violence, especially war, being destructive through war. The second way was that he had no pity. He "cast off all pity." He had none for Jacob, for Israel, and so what we would call this, it manifested itself as ruthlessness. That is what ruthlessness means. It means without pity without any kind of mercy. The Edomites or the people of Edom would never stop. And that is what it talks about it being perpetuated, it being forever.

And so, we have this third one here. It says, "his anger *tore* perpetually." It is kind of a funny way to talk about anger, tearing. But it is simply a very Hebrew way of describing destructive anger, that his anger was always manifesting itself in destruction of Israel's property, Israel's ambitions. Whatever Israel did, Esau's anger, the Edomites anger, was always trying to tear it down. And then the fourth one, which is "[keeping] his wrath forever." It gives you the idea of someone nurturing it. It was a brooding, seething, festering wrath that he just kept boiling inside of him and never let it go.

That paints a horrible picture of a nasty people. They were violent, ruthless, destructive, and seething in their anger.

Let us go to the book of Obadiah. We are just beginning to get on a roll here. Let us start in verse 1.

**Obadiah 1** The vision of Obadiah. Thus says the Lord God concerning Edom. . .

So we know what this book is about right from the first verse.

**Obadiah 3** "The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who dwell in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; you who say in your heart, 'Who will bring me down to the ground?'

The first thing, essentially, out of God's mouth when He is describing the Edomites is this overwhelming pride that they have. That they have set themselves up on this high place and believe that they are unconquerable, that they will never come down, and God is there to say, "Hey, you have to deal with Me and I'm going to bring you low."

**Obadiah 7** "All the men of your confederacy [Hey, what do you know. Here is Edom in a confederacy.] shall force you to the border; the men at peace with you shall deceive you and prevail against you. Those who eat your bread shall lay a trap for you. No one is aware of it."

Here we have the idea that the Edomites get in bed with, politically, people that are just like them— trap setters, deceptive ones that will slit their friends' throats for any kind of advantage. And this is basically telling us what the character of Edom is like.

**Obadiah 10-14** "For your violence against your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever. In the day that you stood on the other side [This is essentially describing how the Edomites acted when the Babylonians came through and destroyed Jerusalem. So we are getting an idea here of how perfidious these Edomites were at that time.]—in the day that you stood on the other side [You were on the other side of things. Remember, this is a *family* relationship, Esau and Jacob were brothers, they should have stood together. But God is saying that they have put themselves as enemies.]—in the day that strangers carried captive his forces, when foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem. [Just put that in the back of your mind.]

Even you were as one of them. [you were an enemy] But you should not have gazed on the day of your brother in the day of his captivity, nor should you have rejoiced over the children of Judah [that is, that they were getting theirs] in the day of their destruction; nor should you have spoken proudly in the day of distress. You should not have entered the gate of My people in the day of their calamity. Indeed, you should not have gazed on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor laid hands on their substance in the

day of their calamity. You should not have stood at the crossroads to cut off those among them who escaped; nor should you have delivered up those among them who remained in the day of distress."

This shows a people who scraped the bottom of the barrel in terms of family love or family covenant activity. What was expected of one family member of another, what one brother should do for another. They did exactly the opposite of what they should do. As a matter of fact, they helped the enemy as much as they could and then ground what was left of Israel underneath their boots.

What we see in these things that we have read is that Edom has a few particular character traits that are consistent throughout Scripture. They have pride that is off the charts. They are opposed to everything God and Israel does. They use violence as a *first* resort, it seems. They are pitiless, that is, without mercy. They take great joy over Israel's destruction, they plunder and rob, take at every opportunity, the things of Israel, the blessings that God has given Israel. And they are very cruel, cruel people. And for these things, God promises them near annihilation. Look at verse 18:

**Obadiah 18** "The house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame; but the house of Esau shall be stubble; they shall kindle them and devour them, and no survivors shall remain of the house of Esau," for the Lord has spoken.

That is not quite as dire as it translated here, where it says "and no survivors shall remain." That word is really, properly, "remnant." What it means is there might be one or two or three or a small amount that survive this, but they will not ever again be a people. They will be absorbed into other groups and essentially disappear.

Now, much of that anti-Israel, anti-God hatred somehow distilled in high concentrations into a nasty poison in Esau's grandson Amalek. Let us go to Genesis 36 and see the beginnings of Amalek. This whole chapter gives us the genealogy of Esau, and all the dukes of Esau and chiefs of Edom and those things that were produced from him. But let us just read verses 1-3 here.

**Genesis 36:1** Now this is the genealogy of Esau, who is Edom.

By the way, this is said four times in this chapter so that we get the idea that Esau *is* Edom. They are the same thing. We need to understand that when God talks about Esau He is talking about Edom. When He is talking about Edom, He is talking about Esau, and that these are real descendants of this actual person.

**Genesis 36:2-3** Esau took his wives from the daughters of Canaan [We are getting an idea here of how he did not take them from Abraham's family back in Haran. He took them from Canaan.]: Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite; Aholibamah the daughter of Anah, the daughter of Zibeon the Hivite [so he took them from the Canaanite tribes]; and Basemath, Ishmael's daughter, sister of Nebajoth.

He has allied himself with the Canaanites, particularly the Hittites and the Hivites, and also with Ishmael, and Ishmael we know is Abraham's son by Hagar. And he himself has grudge against Isaac and against the people of Israel. So these people who are lining up on this Edomite side of things are not your "who's who" of good people of the land. They are the bad people, the enemies. Let us drop down to verse 11.

**Genesis 36:11** And the sons of Eliphaz [Eliphaz is the oldest sons of Esau. He is there in verse 4, Adah bore Eliphaz. So he is the firstborn of Esau.] were Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, and Kenaz.

Some of these names you will find throughout the Bible as specific people, they became their own individual clans.

**Genesis 36:12** Now Timna was the concubine of Eliphaz, Esau's son, and she bore Amalek to Eliphaz. These were the sons of Adah, Esau's wife.

So, here we have that Eliphaz, all these sons, five sons, would be natural sons of his wife and so they would come before Amalek in any sort of

inheritance. Well, what we find in verse 16, guess who is listed among the chiefs? Chief Korah, Chief Gatam, and Chief Amalek. That tells you something about Amalek, that he did not allow his birth to keep him down in any way. He may have been the son of a concubine, but he became a chief, just like Teman, just like Omar, just like Zepho, just like Kenaz, and these others. He was one of the brothers. He was not going to allow his position to keep him down.

What we find is that he became a significant clan or significant tribe among the Edomites and in later times, his people distinguished themselves to the point that they became known separately from all of Edom, and they became known as the most ruthless enemy of Israel.

So, we have here Esau, full of bitter hatred, vowing to kill Jacob for stealing his birthright and his blessing. And of course Ishmael was all wrapped up in this line, too, and he of course had his problems with them. God called him a wild man whose hand was against everyone. But Amalek seems to have been the worst. I mean, worse than Esau, worse than Ishmael, then you have Amalek. We could call him Esau on steroids he hated Israel so much. If he was anything like his descendants, he must have been an ambitious, contentious man who had a knack for getting what he wanted by violence and deceit and doing whatever it took.

Now, this particular man and his descendants distinguish themselves in a bad way. If you would please go to Exodus 17. This is kind of where it all begins. Amalek kind of disappears from history after Genesis 36 and does not pop up until the Israelites are coming out of Egypt, and we find here that they did something that God was incensed about. Just notice verse 16 here, this is after it all happened. This shows you God's reaction.

**Exodus 17:16** For he said [this is Moses saying], "Because the Lord has sworn: the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

That is pretty serious condemnation. Now, this is kind of like an addendum to what God says in Malachi 1:1-5. "Jacob have I loved; Esau I have hated." He had chosen Jacob and He therefore did things for him more than he did for Esau, so he certainly loved him less. But Esau and his descendants

showed themselves *worthy* of hatred. So, what we find here is that God had a special enmity for Amalek. And now let us figure out what it was that turned Him against them.

**Exodus 17:8** Now Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim.

Now, that does not sound all that bad because there are a lot of tribes that would come up and fight against Israel here and there. So that does not seem to make a whole lot of sense. If we just took verse 8 and then verse 16, we would think that God really overreacted. But let us go to Deuteronomy 25 and see what happened here. What we have here is Israel coming out of Egypt and they are attacked on the way. They have just crossed the Red Sea and evidently the Amalekites heard of what had happened down in Egypt and because they are who they are, they take advantage of any kind of situation, they thought that they would go down and plunder Egypt. And so they did. And in coming down to Egypt, they crossed the rear end of Israel's line of march.

**Deuteronomy 25:17-18** "Remember [God says] what Amalek did to you on the way as you were coming out of Egypt, how he met you on the way and attacked your rear ranks, all the stragglers at your rear, when you were tired and weary; and he did not fear God.

Keep your finger there in Deuteronomy 25, we will come back for one more verse in a minute.

What we have here is Israel coming out of Egypt laden with Egyptian gold and all the treasures of Egypt that they had, and there were people that were not able to keep up: the weak, the old, the infirm, the overloaded, bringing all this stuff out of Egypt. And Amalek comes down and sees this and says, "Heh, heh, heh! Alright! We're going to start right here with these Israelites coming out of Egypt." They did not even think about God. I am sure they could see the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud.

But, as it says there in Deuteronomy 25, that they did not fear, that they did not fear God, even though they saw His representation right there. So they decided to attack, they attacked the slow and weak and plodding folk in the



back of the line. And as Moses notes—it is very important that we understand what he said there at the end of verse 18—that the Amalekites failed to include God in their calculations.

Now, I want you to note here, just write this down, keep it in the back of your mind, however you want to do it. Their not fearing God is a consistent theme of their attacks on Israel. They never put God into their calculations, they never see Him at work. They do not see God. All they understand, all they think about, is that the Israelites, Jacob, had originally wronged them and they are going to get their revenge. They are going to get theirs back. We could call them practical atheists if you want to. They do not see God at all in their minds in what is going on. They are just going to get what is theirs. Psalm 10:3-11 describes this kind of person, "There is no thought of God in their eyes."

Back to Exodus 17. Joshua went out with a bunch of men after Moses gave him the command to do so and they fought against the Amalekites. Moses was up there on the rock overlooking the battle, and every time he would raise his hands, Israel would be victorious, prevail over the Amalekites. But as a man, you can only hold your arms up so long and when his arms got tired, the Amalekites started doing better. So Aaron and Hur decided, "Hey, let's prop up his arms!" And so they held up his arms and Israel was given the victory.

**Exodus 17:13-16** So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write this for a memorial in the book and recount in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." And Moses built an altar and called its name, The-Lord-Is-My-Banner; for he said, "Because the Lord has sworn: the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

That is why God has this hatred of Amalek: that they pick on the weak, those who are in the rear, those who cannot defend themselves, and that they do not see Him in what is going on. They are totally blind to His activity and what He wants. And then here back in Deuteronomy 25, we find,

**Deuteronomy 25:19** "Therefore it shall be, when the Lord your God has given you rest from your enemies all around [Remember, He had said to Moses, tell this to Joshua in his hearing. Joshua would be the one to take them into the land.], in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance, that you will blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. You shall not forget."

When God says something like that, it must mean that His mind is made up. He had judged them to be worthy of pretty much extermination for their attitudes, but they forgot. Israel let Amalek slip away time and time again. So you get to the time of Saul. Let us go to I Samuel 14. There is a reason I am doing this. We are talking about the book of Esther here, but we have got to lay this foundation here because you need to understand what is the background for what is written in the book of Esther.

**I Samuel 14:47-48** So Saul established his sovereignty over Israel, and fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, against the people of Ammon, against Edom, against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines. Wherever he turned, he harassed them. And he gathered an army and attacked the Amalekites, and delivered Israel from the hands of those who plundered them.

Here we see that the Amalekites are up to their old tricks. They had not been put down during the time of Joshua or any of the judges. And so what they had been doing was raiding Israel from time to time and plundering, taking their livestock and whatever wealth they had, and hightailing it back to where they lived. And Saul said, "We've got to put a stop to this." So he assembled an army to take care of the matter. And it looks like he probably did. He probably drove them well out of the country and for the most part stopped their constant incursions. Well, that was not enough for God.

**I Samuel 15:1-3** Samuel also said to Saul, "The Lord sent me to anoint you king over His people, over Israel. Now therefore, heed the voice of the words of the Lord. Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'I

will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel, how he ambushed him on the way when he came up from Egypt. Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both men and women, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.'" [total annihilation]

He is using Saul and the Israelites here as His sort of judgment. He had made the decision. This needs to happen and because of all the sins that were mounting up before Him, He is using His people as the sword of vengeance, the sword of justice against Amalek. So Saul did what He said to a point, but he let someone live.

**I Samuel 15:7-9** And Saul attacked the Amalekites from Havilah all the way to Shur, which is east of Egypt. He also took Agag king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and were unwilling to utterly destroy them. But everything despised and worthless, they utterly destroyed.

They did not follow through with what God said and so God had to send Samuel to Saul and said, "Hey, you didn't do what I said. You're rejected as king." And He also therefore had to do what Saul did not do.

**I Samuel 15:32-33** Then Samuel said, "Bring Agag king of the Amalekites here to me." So Agag came to him cautiously. [I bet he did!] And Agag said, "Surely the bitterness of death is past." [You are not going to kill me. It has all just been a misunderstanding, or something like that.] But Samuel said, "As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women." And Samuel hacked Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal.

Do you think there might have been some bad blood between these people? Samuel though, as the prophet, was acting as God's executioner here and killed the king of the Amalekites.

These accounts that we have seen up to this point relate the sort of proud, pitiless, mean-spirited, hit them when they are down, underhanded trickery,

and terrorism that the Amalekites always seem to use. It is very consistent throughout the Scriptures. And we can only conclude that these tactics and these character traits are passed from generation to generation, becoming pretty much a hereditary trait. It is not really hereditary, it is through teaching, through attitudes. It is just like modern day Palestinians getting their kids to dress up like terrorists and teaching them, basically, martyrdom and terrorism from an early age.

This is the sort of thing that God is very much against, and it was the sort of thing that was seen in Amalek. It just was perpetuated from generation to generation. And God has recorded these episodes in His Word to show us how Amalek historically treats Israel, how the enemies of God in general treat Israel and treat the people of God because, as Paul puts it, we know Satan's devices. We need to kind of study them and have them in the back of our minds so that we can be prepared to defend against them. We need to know our enemies. So if a confederacy is formed against Israel or the church, the Amalekites are certain to be in there somehow, and they will use any means available to bring her down.

But that is not the end of the biblical story of the Amalekites. Some of them must have escaped Saul and Samuel. And how do I know that? Half a millennium later, as recorded in the book of Esther, an evil man named Haman plotted genocide against the Persian Jews. And we are going, for the rest of the time, to study this man. To see that he was cut from the same cloth that historically all of Amalek has been. So on to Esther, finally.

I really felt that that very long introduction was necessary so that we understand what we are dealing with here. Because sometimes, like I mentioned before, we had that Hanna-Barbera cartoon that we saw in our house sometimes nearly every week. It depends on how much the kids really wanted to see Esther. But they made Haman up to be fairly comic figure and they were trying to keep kids interests so they had to do something like that. But the Bible does not present him as a comic figure. The Bible presents him as an Amalekite and we need to take that seriously.

So let us read just the first verse of Esther 3. This is after Esther became queen and if you look just above this, at the end of chapter 2, Mordecai had discovered a plot against the king and they were able to save the king from

assassination. But Mordecai was not rewarded. It was written down in the Chronicles, but he was not given the award usually given to somebody who had done such a wonderful, heroic thing for the king.

**Esther 3:1** After these things, King Ahasuerus promoted Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him and set his seat above all the princes who were with him.

Any Jew, anyone who was familiar with the Bible and the history of Israel from the very beginning, from Genesis, would immediately know certain things by this opening paragraph. They would realize that calling Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, they would know just about everything they needed to know about this character. Remember, for those of you who were here for my first two sermons, especially the one where we concentrated on Mordecai, that Mordecai was, as it says back here in chapter 2, verse 5, son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamiite. Now that we have him introduced, the reader who is familiar with Israelite history would understand that these not only are Benjamite names, but they are Saulite names. And they would immediately make the connection between Saul and Mordecai, especially when chapter 3, verse 1 comes up and there is an Agagite. We just read that in I Samuel 15 about Saul coming up against Agag and failing.

So what chapter 3, verse 1 does, in combination of chapter 2, verse 5, it sets up a new Saul versus Agag scenario. The author wants us, with just these few words, to realize that the upcoming conflict, which would take place later in chapter 3 and all the way through chapter 10, was another iteration of the perpetual hostility of Amalek against Israel. And all he needs to do is just drop this hint to explain Haman's attitude toward Mordecai, and really, Mordecai's attitude toward Haman. And also realize that Haman's over the top genocidal plan against the Jews was par for the course for Amalek. So all he needs to do is just say these few words and give his genealogy and the intelligent reader would say, "Ok, I understand what's going on here already."

Let us just go quickly through these names. Hammedatha is a Persian name and it means either "double," like Doublemint gum, or it means "given by the moon." Whichever one you take, it is a bad thing because probably double has to do with either being double-dealing or two-faced, both bad things that

a normal person with any kind of character would not want to do. Given by the moon points to paganism. That there was a pagan god and that is where their allegiance was, not to God. Remember Amalek does not fear God. Amalek is always against God. They worship pagan gods.

Agag. There is a kind of an interesting word. It is not a name. It is treated in the Bible like a name, but it is really a title and it is a title used by many Amalekite kings. Just like Pharaoh is not a name, it is a title. It means "great house," meaning the top family of the nation. Just like Abimelech of the Philistines is not a name. It is title. It means either "the father is king" or "my father was king," meaning that he has hereditary rights to the throne. Agag is like that, and it has three possible meanings. No one knows exactly what it means, but all three can be looked at in a negative sense.

The first one, which I thought was very interesting, is that Agag means literally, "I will overtop." Kind of strange. But what it suggests is "I'm going to be the top dog. I'm going to conquer. I'm going to put myself on top." The second of them is it can mean, "flame," like a fire. It suggests heat, energy, light, or even destruction, destroyer. That is what a flame does. It can do any of those things. And the third one, which I think is probably the one I lean toward most, is that Agag simply means "violent," which fits right in with the description of the Amalekites throughout the Bible.

What Haman means is uncertain. You will look in lexicons and they will say, "Oh it means magnificent." It is true that the Persian name may indeed mean magnificent. But we are reading a Hebrew book here and so we need to understand what its sound would mean in Hebrew, and the similar roots in Hebrew mean one of two things. Either "to confirm" or in the same vein "to be truthful," or it could mean "unrest, clamor, noise." Now what the vast majority of Jews believe it means unrest, clamor, or noise, and when they have the public readings of Esther on Purim, whenever Haman's name is mentioned, they all go and make all kinds of noises so that you understand that this is the bad guy.

Haman, of course, is the villain of the story and the author presents him as thoroughly evil, thoroughly unlikable, and that he bears a deep hatred for Mordecai, specifically. He hates Mordecai. Now, we have to remember from when we went through this the last time about Mordecai, that yes, God is not

mentioned in this book, but Mordecai is the stand-in, he is the standard. What Mordecai does is what God would do. He is elevated quite a bit in this book. But if you look through the things that Mordecai does in the book, you would see it is the proper righteous reaction to what is going on and he makes all the right moves. He gives all the good advice and he is the one that is glorified in the end. Mordecai, we could say, stands in for God. And Haman stands in for Satan, if we want to make that kind of analogy.

We see here that Haman has a hatred for Mordecai that is just beyond all bounds. Just like Satan's hatred for God is beyond all bounds. What we see as we go through this is that Haman is a schemer, a power hungry man. He is the exact representative of an Amalekite. And as the author writes it, Haman has no redeemable qualities and he gets what he deserves in the end. If you want to flip forward a few pages, you find out that he was "hanged" and I put that in quotes because it was probably he was impaled. He was hanged, yes, on a pole. There is a kind of interesting thing, I do not know if I will get to it, so I will tell you now. The pole was 70 feet high and he and his sons, his ten sons, were all impaled or hanged on the same pole. One on top of the other. (I am glad we are not eating for a while.) Think about that.

Let us go to Proverbs 16, verse 18. This is essentially Haman's theme.

**Proverbs 16:18** Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

That is kind of the lesson of Haman and we see it play throughout Esther 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 until his death.

**Esther 3:2-6** And all the king's servants who were within the king's gate bowed and paid homage to Haman, for so the king had commanded concerning him. But Mordecai would not bow or pay homage. Then the king's servants who were within the king's gates said to Mordecai, "Why do you transgress the king's command?" Now it happened, when they spoke to him daily and he would not listen to them, that they told it to Haman [nice friends, huh?], to see whether Mordecai's words would stand; for Mordecai had told them that he was a Jew. When Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow or pay homage, Haman was filled with wrath. But he

disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they had told him of the people of Mordecai. Instead, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews who were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus—the people of Mordecai.

Alright, nice guy that Haman.

What we see here as this unfolds, is that Haman and Mordecai are presented as perpetual enemies in a long line of enemies, one on each side. God's side on Mordecai side and the Devil's side, Satan's side on Haman's side. And as we saw which stretches all the way back to at least the exodus, and we could make an argument for it stretching all the way back to Rebecca's womb, when Esau and Jacob contended with one another. Chapters 2 and 3 here make it, as I mentioned, a renewal of the conflict between Saul and Agag. And the question is as this begins to unfold, will Mordecai make the same mistake as Saul? Or will he prevail over his and his people's and his God's enemy in a godly way? Will he do what is right? Or will he fail? Will he go the same way as many of his forebears had gone and not done what God had commanded? Or would he be worthy of honor and exaltation to royal power? Will he be rewarded for doing well?

So let us look at a few details here. The first one is in chapter 3, verse 2 where it says at the end of this verse that the king had commanded the people to bow down to Haman. Now, this is interesting because it makes a point. It points out that the king had to *command* people to do this. It makes you wonder that people instinctively knew that Haman was not worthy of honor, but because of his position, it had to be commanded of them, that they bow down to him. It had to be forced because it could be easily seen that this guy was a wretched man, full of pride, and full of underhandedness. But most people went along with it.

Mordecai though—remember he is the representative of God, he is the one who does the right thing—he refuses to play the hypocrite. He alone of all the people in Shushan, refused to give honor to this scumbag of a man even though he would face a very stiff penalty from the king if he ever found out. He was willing to take the chance that he could even be executed, but he would not bow down to this enemy of God.



Another detail here. Mordecai does not answer the question in chapter 3, verse 3. "Why do you transgress the king's command?" No answer is given. It is almost like Mordecai does not even deign to answer it, it was so obvious that this was a bad man. This is a terrible person. In fact, throughout the whole book of Esther, the author never really answers the question, not outright. But the hint within the context here, verses 3-6 or so, is that the reason why he did not do it has something to do with him being a Jew, being one of God's people, that is.

Of course it also had to do with Haman being Amalekite, an Agagite. That these two groups were in such opposition to one another, that they would not give each other any honor. It is almost in the blood now by this time, because remember we are down after 480 BC. This has been going on for more than 1,000 years, this enmity between Esau and Jacob, and Amalek and Israel. And so it was so ingrained that they would not give each other an inch anymore, at least those who understood God's judgment on Amalek among the Israelites would not do it.

Now, this is where we must bring in again that Mordecai expresses God's will in Esther. He is worthy of this kind of honor. As a matter of fact, it says it in several places that these people were worthy of God's wrath in judgment. I want to go to one of those just point to out to you. Remember, I just told you that the date of this time period here that we are talking about was after 480 BC. So it was after the prophets, for the most part, had already finished writing. And so the prophecies about Edom were already in the book, and Mordecai, I believe, had access to those. He knew them, he knew those prophecies. So let us just pick one of them up.

Isaiah has a prophecy against Edom. Jeremiah has a prophecy against Edom. We saw Obadiah's prophesy against Edom, Ezekiel has a prophecy or two against Edom. Let us go to the one in chapter 25, and just see what is being said here. This is specifically about Edom, of which Amalek is a part.

**Ezekiel 25:12-14** "Thus says the Lord God: "Because of what Edom did against the house of Judah by taking vengeance, and has greatly offended by avenging itself on them," therefore thus says the Lord God: "I will stretch out My hand against Edom, cut off man and beast from it, and make it desolate from Teman; Dedan

shall fall by the sword. I will lay My vengeance on Edom by the hand of My people Israel [notice that, He was going to use Israel to execute His will against Edom], that they may do in Edom according to My anger and according to My fury; and they shall know My vengeance," says the Lord God.

This was already there when Mordecai was facing Haman. He knew this. If you want to put down the whole chapter of Ezekiel 35, you will see that this is said again, but it is just in a longer way. And every one of the prophecies against Edom in Isaiah and Jeremiah and Obadiah and Ezekiel and even that one at the beginning of Malachi, they all say the same thing. So Mordecai had no question about what God's will was in this matter. What we can say is that Mordecai saw Haman, not just a man of evil character, which he definitely was, but also as a dead man walking. That is, he was under the condemnation of God and therefore not worthy of honor in the least.

We also saw another link with the Amalekites here and that is that when Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow or pay him homage, Haman was filled with wrath. That is a big word when it comes to the Amalekites and the Edomites—that he was filled with wrath. Haman had his pride pricked and he reacts with anger, and instead of being content to kill Mordecai alone, he escalates it to genocide for all of Mordecai's people, all of God's people. So he would kill thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands of Jews to spite one man's refusal to honor him. In modern day parlance, we would call it overkill, a clear sign of either madness or satanic influence, or both.

What does Jesus say about Satan in John 8:44? That he was a murderer from the beginning and the father of it. And then He goes down and tells us that he is also the father of lies. If you are interested, you might want to check out Proverbs 14:17, Proverbs 19:19, Proverbs 21:24, Proverbs 29:22, and Ecclesiastes 7:9.

**Galatians 5:19-20** These are the works of the flesh [and it is interesting how many of them fit the Amalekites and Haman] are evident [they are clearly seen], which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness [this first group has to do with sexual types of sins], idolatry [we saw that], sorcery [did not see that], hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions,

dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

So we see Haman and the Amalekites were of another kingdom and they were fulfilling all these works of the flesh.

**Esther 3:7** In the first month, which is the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, they cast Pur (that is, the lot), before Haman to determine the day and the month, until it fell on the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar.

Here for the first time in the book of Esther, the word *pur* comes in, and *pur*, meaning lot, is the root by which we get the name Purim, which the Jews celebrate every year in the February-March time period. Purim simply means lots because they cast the lot for this time. (By the way, if you are interested, Purim this year is March 12th.) So Haman used lots which among the pagans were a kind of fortune-telling method to choose the day of the Jews' annihilation, and of course God turned this upside down and made it the day of the Jews' deliverance. In Proverbs 16 is a very interesting scripture.

**Proverbs 16:33** The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord

What we see here in Esther 3:7 is God's sovereignty coming into play. Yes, they cast the lot to figure out when the destruction of the Jews would be. But God chose the day. We see His sovereignty coming to the fore. It says there that Haman did this in the first month. That would be the month of Nisan or Abib in Hebrew. But what month did he get? He got Adar, which is the twelfth month. And we find out in verse 12 that this was at least before the 13th day of Nisan. So this was very early in the year and God picked a day that was very late in the year. It gave them nearly an entire calendar year to go from choosing the day to when the day was supposed to be fulfilled. He gave Mordecai and Esther almost an entire year to foil the plan and they have made good use of the time. We will get to that in a minute.

**Esther 3:8-11** Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, "There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from all other people's, and they do not keep the king's laws. Therefore it is not fitting for the king to let them remain. If it pleases the king, let a decree be written that they be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those who do the work, and bring it into the king's treasuries." So the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews. And the king said to Haman, "The money and the people are given to you, to do with them as seems good to you."

This is a horrible passage. Here we see more of Haman's vile character coming out. What we see him doing is manipulating the king in a couple of ways. Haman is no dummy. He knows how to do bad things very well. The first thing he does is he lies to him. He lies to the king and he does this with a subtle mix of truth, half truths, and lies.

Now, let us look at that. What did he tell him? "There is a people scattered and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of your kingdom." That is true. They were scattered and dispersed among the people. "Their laws are different from all other peoples." That is also true. Only the Jews had the laws of God. "And they do not keep the king's laws." Uh oh, now we are getting into some falsehood. They *did* keep the king's laws *except* where they came in conflict with God's laws. What he fails to tell the king is that the laws that they keep that are different from their own, are religious laws, not civil laws. But he makes it sound like that they are conducting their own kind of government within the Persian Empire, that they are doing all these things on their own.

Let us just go ahead here: "and they do not keep the king's laws," which is a lie. They did keep the king's laws. They just kept their own laws above the king's if they came into conflict. So he says, "Therefore it is not fitting for the king to let them remain." What Haman does here is imply to the king that the Jews are rebellious. That is a total lie. There were many of them working in the government and they were just fine. What he implies also is that they have a nascent rebellion in the works. And of course the king should nip it in

the bud. That is the gist of what he is telling him here. "There is these people out there and I've gotten wind that they're not keeping your laws. We need to annihilate them now before they become stronger." Notice, he does not mention Mordecai and his not bowing at all. He uses this pretext to get the king to give him the authority here.

There was plenty here in what he said to Ahasuerus to sway him against the Jews. Remember what I said about him last time, that he was very prickly about his honor and his power, and this offended him that the people would try to rebel within his borders. So he was pretty much convinced at this point.

But then we have verse 9. The second thing that he does is that he sweetens the deal with the promise of cash for the king's treasury. He says he would give him 10,000 talents of silver. It is a huge sum, enough to finance a war if he wanted to. It is equivalent in today's money to about \$7 billion dollars. That he was putting up \$7 billion dollars, evidently of his own money. How did he get all that money? With an Amalekite I do not think it was, you know, selling lemonade. But you have to remember, this is Xerxes the king. He had just come back from defeat in Greece. He had tremendous war debts and he came back and decided to make himself feel better by building big buildings, which also needed a great deal of money. So he began taxing his people terribly to pay for all this junk. And so because Ahasuerus had debts from all of these things, he needed the cash. And Haman promised a way for him to get out from under his debts.

The ten thousand talents figure was probably an exaggeration, but it was enough to prick Ahasuerus' ears and say, "Hey, this sounds like a good idea. We will trade all of these people, whoever they are, these not law abiding people, for the seven billion in cash." So he accepted the offer and being incompetent, as we said that he was, the king just turns over his signet ring to Haman. In effect, he handed all the power of his throne over to the enemy of the Jews. That is basically what it is saying there in verse 10. Haman had a free hand to do whatever he wanted. And then the king turns around in verse 11 and says, "The money is yours, keep the money and do this," which is stupid. I do not quite get it. He just foolishly totally trusted Haman to make good on his promise, gave him carte blanche, and provided no oversight. Haman was free to commit genocide with all the money and power at the disposal of the Persian government.

**Esther 3:12-15** The the king's scribes were called on the thirteenth day of the first month [What is the 13th day of the first month? The day before Passover and it is escalating here as how bad it is getting.], and a decree was written according to all that Haman commanded [There it is again. Haman was ramrodding this.], to the king's satraps, governors who were over each province, to the officials of all people, every province according to its script, and to every people in their language. In the name of King Ahasuerus it was written, and sealed with the king's signet ring.

And the letters were sent by couriers into all the king's provinces [notice how this is put], to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is in the month of Adar, and to plunder their possessions. A copy of the document was to be issued as law in every province, being published for all people, that they should be ready for that day. The couriers went out, hastened by the king's command; and the decree was proclaimed in Shushan the citadel. [And this next line is ghastly.] So the king and Haman sat down to drink [They had a party. Remember from chapter 1 where they had this drinking party for days. Haman and the king, after commanding genocide against the Jews, sat down to drink.], and the city of Shushan was perplexed.

Classic understatement. The author of this book is magnificent. The margin, if you look there, it says that the city was in confusion. What it really means is that people were aghast. They were horrified, appalled, dismayed. The imagery of what is going on here in this last sentence of the chapter is that the people of Shushan were running around like ants whose hill had just been kicked over, and they were asking, what brought this on? What are we going to do? Hitler is on the loose, Holocaust is coming. That is essentially what it was. Fifth century <sup>BC</sup> holocaust by a fifth century <sup>BC</sup> Hitler. And they had to think about it for 11 months.

How are they going to get out of this? Shushan was probably full of Jews. Mordecai and Esther were there and they probably had a lot of their friends and relatives and such. And the Jews were reading this announcement on the

day of the Passover and thinking, "We're doomed! How are we going to be saved?" Chapter 4 gives us the answer.

Let us finish in Psalm 3. I will give you the answer right now.

**Psalm 3:1-8** Lord, how they have increased who trouble me! Many are they who rise up against me. Many are they who say of me, "There is no help for him in God." Selah. But You, O Lord, are a shield for me, my glory and the One who lifts up my head. I cried to the Lord with my voice, and He heard me from His holy hill. Selah. I lay down and slept; I awoke, and the Lord sustained me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around. Arise O Lord; save me, O my God! For You have struck all my enemies on the cheekbone; You have broken the teeth of the ungodly. Salvation belongs to the Lord. Your blessing is upon Your people. Selah.

And that is exactly how it works out in Esther, even though God seems to be hidden from sight. But that is a story for another sermon.